

# User guide for the general public

The BAP sets out most important actions for conserving Northamptonshire's wildlife. It is not an exhaustive list but it does set out an action plan for the county's priority habitats and species: those which are rare, threatened, relied upon by local wildlife and wouldn't survive without conservation action.

## Importance of biodiversity

Biodiversity – a contraction of 'biological diversity' – simply means the variety of life. It refers to the number, variety and variability of living organisms. It is often defined in terms of genes, species and ecosystems and is important for a range of reasons:

- **Appreciation:** many people have an interest in wildlife; approximately 1 in 10 UK adults are members of an environment and/or conservation group<sup>1</sup>
- **Quality of life:** wildlife can give us a sense of well-being, helping us to relax and improve our mental and physical health
- **Ecosystem services:** biodiversity provides humans with vital (and often under-valued) services such as climatic stability, clean air and water, pollination and flood protection
- **Economic benefits:** visitors who come to see wildlife and attractive landscapes spend money and contribute to the local economy. A biodiverse area is also more likely to be a desirable place to live and work.
- **Local distinctiveness:** the natural environment is an important part of local heritage, contributing to a sense of place and creating much of what makes Northamptonshire distinctive
- **Sustainable development:** biodiversity is a key aspect of sustainable development, ensuring that we pass on a healthy, functioning natural environment to future generations

We can all enjoy and support wildlife whether it be in our gardens, parks, nature reserves or the wider countryside.

## Aim of the BAP

The aim of the BAP is to provide guidance on Northamptonshire's conservation priorities, how to achieve them and who should, and could, be involved.

The BAP provides a baseline, targets and an action plan up to 2020 for each priority habitat and associated species.

## Structure of the BAP

The BAP was developed by the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Partnership, a group of conservation organisations, government bodies and local authorities. It reflects collective priorities for conservation and agreed actions to halt wildlife and habitat losses in Northamptonshire by 2020.

- **Introduction:** includes a background to BAPs, the state of wildlife in the county and the principles for its future conservation. It also identifies priority habitats in each of

<sup>1</sup> Cracknell J, Miller F, Williams H. 2013. Passionate Collaboration? Taking the pulse of the UK environmental sector. Report to the Environmental Funders Network.

Northamptonshire's National Character Areas.

- **General Action Plans (GAP):** these seven plans cover general strategies, targets and actions for conservation. They apply to all habitats and areas, and include actions in which anyone can get involved. Of particular relevance to the general public is the urban and artificial habitats GAP.
- **Habitat Action Plans (HAP):**
  - provide a description and baseline for each priority habitat, along with a list of priority areas and a general strategy for conservation
  - set out SMART<sup>2</sup> targets for the conservation of each priority habitat focussing on what proportion should be managed, restored and created by 2020
  - identify priority species associated with each habitat.
- **Appendices:** includes a list of priority species occurring in Northamptonshire and the habitats with which they are associated. Most species will be protected through conservation of the priority habitats, however in some cases additional conservation actions are also included.

## How can the public use it?

- The BAP offers information on how you can help our county's wildlife by:
  - making your garden more nature friendly
  - taking part in wildlife surveys
  - working with others to make your local green spaces more diverse
  - getting involved with practical conservation activities (e.g. with the Wildlife Trust).

## Monitoring and feedback

The BAP is informed by an evidence base built up through survey work and species recording. To monitor its success up-to-date surveys are required. To help the success of the BAP, why not send your wildlife sightings and action to the [Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre](#)?

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<sup>2</sup> SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely